How to Make a Simple Nest Box Retriever

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How to Make a Simple Nest Box Retriever

If you have hanging nest boxes, a question that you have is how do you put up and take down the nest boxes? One answer is to use the simple hook retriever that consists of just 3 parts:

1. A 4½-5” round screw hook. Preferably it is pointed on the hook end.
2. A paint roller. Rollers with wooden handles are preferable as they tend to be thicker, and not hollow for the entire length of the handle.
3. A painter's extension pole the length of which, when fully extended, will comfortably reach the highest branch from which you intend to hang a box.

To assemble the retriever:

1. If needed, sharpen the hook’s curved end to make it pointed. You should also open the hook up slightly. Both of these actions will better enable getting the hook between the tree’s branch and box’s hanger wire.
2. Cut the handle off the paint roller while preserving as much of the handle as possible.
3. Inspect the cut end. If it is hollow, you will likely to insert a piece of a wooden dowel to fill the empty space inside the cut end of the handle.
4. Drill a hole through the handle (and dowel) that is less in diameter than the hook’s threaded end. Remember that you can always make the hole larger, but not smaller.
5. Fully screw the eye hook into the handle (and through the dowel), but doesn’t protrude on the opposite side. The hook should not be too hard or too easy to turn.
6. Screw the assembly onto the extension pole.
Using the Retriever

Usually it takes some practice before one becomes proficient at hanging and retrieving boxes. It would be much better to first practice with an empty box than to begin with an occupied box.

Once the box is occupied, its contents are in your hands... be careful not to drop the box.

The steps to hang a box include:

- Select a branch that will easily support the box, and provide shade for the box at least during the hottest part of the day. All day shade is naturally better. The position of the box should allow for unimpeded access.
- Turn the box’s hanger hook such that when the box is hung, it will have the shade and access previously discussed. You may choose to reform the hook so that it better fits the branch.
- Extend the retriever’s pole to the length needed to easily reach the branch. Securely lock the pole to prevent its length from changing during the procedure.
- Turn the retriever’s hook slight to the left or right so it will be pointed away from the selected branch.
- While holding the retriever near the end with the hook, hang the box on the retriever’s hook.
- Bring the pole with box into a vertical position, and moving your hands down the pole to the other end.
- Lift the box’s hanger up and over the branch, and then lower the box.
- Slip the retriever’s hook out from under the box’s hanger, and lower the pole.

The steps to retrieve a box include:

- Observe the position of the hanging box. You will want to position the retriever’s hook under the box’s hanger, but from the side of the hanger that connects directly to the box.
- Turn the retriever’s hook slight to the left or right so it will be pointed away from the branch.
- Slip the retriever’s hook between the box’s hanger and branch, lift up to free the box, and carefully lower the box.
- Keep the retriever vertical for as long as you can while working your hands toward the box. The effort to support the box multiplies as the pole becomes more horizontal.
- The box should remain upright due to its own weight.
- When possible, grab the box’s hanger keeping the box upright.